The Ancient local Administrative System of Sri Lanka as reflected in the Chronicles and some Inscriptions.

The **MAHAWAMSA,** the great chronicle was written by a Buddhist monk of the Maha vihara fraternity which was considered more orthodox than Abhayagiri and Jetavana fraternities, during the last stage of the 5th century A.D. or the first stage of the 6th century A.D.

Being a Buddhist monk his concepts and ideas can be found throughout the chronicle.

But the importance of MAHAWAMSA, in relation to the historical administrative system is accepted by scholars without any question.

Mahawamsa helps to understand the reality of the inscriptions written during the period of the chronicle.

In those days the king always being a Buddhist was bound to follow many ethics in order to rule the country.

These ethics are called "**DASA RAJA DHAMMA**" , the ten fold royal virtues or rules of good governance. These virtues are rules of morality that every Buddhist expected to be observed by the king.

These Virtues are ;

1.	dana	:	alms giving ; generosity in giving ; be munificient.
2.	Seela	:	Moral observances ; morality.
3.	paricchage	:	liberality, self sacrifice or unselfishness Remunerate the deserving.
4.	ajjava	:	Straightness ; honesty ; Let your conduct be upright.
5.	majjava	:	Gentleness; not being given to luxurious living ; Let your conduct be mild.
6.	tapo	:	Self restraint ; be patient ;
7.	akkhoda	:	Have no anger ; Be without malice.
8.	avihimsa	:	non violence ; inflict no pain

9.	khanti	:	Forbearance ; patience ; Be merciful.
10.	avirodhana	:	Non abstraction, Agreeability ; Attentd to good counsel,

The subjects expected the king to rule the country according to the above virtues.

This is mentioned in various classical literary sources[1] and in some inscriptions.[2]

In the Velaikkara inscription, it indicated that the king must hold the kingship to protect Buddhism[3].

It further mentions that it is the kings duty to accept any good or any bad in every aspect when he rules the country[4].

The king while asbstaining from the SATARA AGATI or the four wrong paths, which means,

1.	Chanda	:	or the path of greed,
2.	Dwesha	:	or the path of hate.
3.	Bhaya	:	or the path of cowardice.
4.	Moha	:	or the path of delusion.

He should observe **SATARA SANGRAHA WASTU,** or the four ways of showing favour, which means ;

1. Priya wachana bhavitaya or kindly speech,
2. Pariththyagaya or Dana or liberality.
3. Artha Charyawa or beneficial actions.
4. Samanathmatawaya or impartiality.

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[1] 1. *kavsilumina, 2. poojavaliya,*
3. saddarmarathnavaliya.

[2] *Epigraphina zeylanica, (= EZ)*
EZ, vol:iv,p71
EZ, vol:ii, P 252
EZ, vol: i P 180,
EZ, vol ; ii, P 80.

[3] *FZ:Vol.i.P253*

[4] *Mahawamsa, 21:27:32,*
Chulawamsa, 36:76:90.

These were mentioned in many Buddhist literary books[5] and also in many inscriptions[6] during the period of Mahawansa.

According to the two kings, Seetawaka Rajasingha and Mayadunne followed the above mentioned **CHARITRA DHARMA** or the customary virtues or the ritualistic behaviours that subjects expected the kings to observe.

King Elara who assassinated King Asela and conquered the kingdom of Anuradhapura had to rule according to these **CHARITRA DHARMA** or customary normes[7].

According to the Mahawamsa as we discussed up to this point the rulers of the Seetawaka period, the moralities of the kings called "**DHARMA"** were carried out by special counsellers called "**DAHAM PASAKNA**" and " **DADA NAYAKA**"

In the Sitawaka period a counseller named Kawyasekara Brahmana in the office of **DAHAM PASAKNA** advised king Sitawaka Rajasinghe. It was mentioned in Sitawaka Rajasinha Rajya Kalaya written during that period[8].

The duties of **DAHAM PASAKNA** are mentined in the books Nikaya Sangrahaya, Kandavuru Sirita and in the inscription of Gadaladeniya.

Professor Senarath Paranavitana Says that **DAHAM PASAKNA** was an officer who helped the king at that time[9].

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[5] *Culawansa (= Cu) 17:180:181*
Digha Nikaya, (Din) Yol 111, 182
Cu : 37 :108 and 99 : 76
Saddharma lankarayа
[6] Ez, Vol ii, P. 106

[7] *Mahawamsa, 21:14:32:14*
[8] *Prof.Risiman Amarasinghe, Aitihasika Seetawaka P. 45*
I BID : Seetawaka Rajasinha Rajya Kalaya
'KO' ola leaf.
Prof.Risiman Amarasinghe, Maharawa law Journal, P. 25
"Socialogical Study on some Aspects of Sri Lankan Law" (Manu)
[9] *EZ, Vol: iv P 109 an 8 N*

The office of this **DAHAM PASAKNA** is very similar to the office of "**DARMADAKSA**" in India.

The office of "**DHARMA PRATTYAKSHA NAYAKA**" can be found not only in the Sitawaka period but also in the other periods. So we can see that this officer was the kings legal officer.

During the period of king Senarath (1604 - 1615 D.C.) the king had a legal officer called by the same name. It is mentioned in the book Andi Malaya[10].

That king Mayadunne permitted[11] Dadanayaka Diyogudu Silva Wickramasingha Mudaliyar to wage war aganist king Veediye Bandara in the "Palanda War" is mentioned in the Setawaka Rajasinha Rajja Kalaya.

Professor Senarath Paranawitana confirmed that the ruling periods before king Dewanampiyatissa were executed by the leaders called Gamini or Gramini but not by the kings themselves. They ruled according to the wish of the subjects[12].

But Gamini or the king had only a limited legislative power. When the king was concerned , although we think that the king had three powers the executive, the legislative and the judicial, it was not so. All the above mentioned rulers had only a limited legislative power. The rule was according to the wish of the subjects.

The king was able to executive these royal laws only according to the wish of the subjects. The king could not do anything according to his own wish.

This happened during the period of king Dhatusena (455 473 Dc). The king called Kuda Parinda was brought to the royal court and he was punished according to the existing royal laws, during that period.

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[10] i. *This unprinted ola leaf book of verse including 98 poems is protected in the Ellawala Raja Maha Viharaya.*
ii. *Manu: p . 25; fn.12*

[11] Seetawaka Rajasinghe Rajjakalaya, P.35, P. 'Ka'

[12] Silumina Shastriya saha Aitihasika Atirekaya, 1936 Sep 20, P.108.

All the subjects took king Dhatusena's side by opposing king Kuda Parinda[13].

Sinhala law clearly show us that even the king could hot interfere with the existing law and the king had no right what so ever to do so and the law maintains as a free institution.

During those days the king had many duties to perform and the king could not do all these duties by himself alone.

So he selected members from various castes specially from the Khsatriya caste and from the royalty or Radalayas, to his royal court.

Among these members he had a **MAHAMATHYA** (Prime Minster) and many other ministers.

For example king Dhatusena had a royal cabinet and the king was bound to accept the various decisions of the royal court.This unanimous decision was called **' EKA MATHIKA TEERANAYA'**or **EKA STHANA SAMMATA**, or **EK-TAN SAMIYA.**[14]

In one inscription there are two words, **"AMATE PAHEJA",** Prof. Senerath Paranawithana explains this as **"AMATYA PARISHAD."** It means the king's cabinet.

In those days the duties of these ministers were :-

1. collecting the taxes,
2. ruling the divisions of the country and so on,

During those days there was an institution called **"AMATHYA PARISHAD."** The king did not preside over this institution. It was presided over by an officer called **'PIRITHTHIRAD.'**

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[13] *Prof.Paranawithana,S.,*
The story of singiriya,
(C = SS) Colombo 1972, P. 24
[14] I. *ss . p. 30*
II .manu : p31.

So we can come to the conclusion that the king himself did not have the legislative power. He always managed to carry out his legislative powers through his cabinet or through the members of the royal court.

The only legislative power that the king maintained was to place his signature to the laws prepared by an officer called "**VOHARA.**"

These always must be confirmed unanimously by the law officers who made laws before submitting them to the king for his signature as final confirmation.

In order to understand this world "**VOHARA**" we should draw our attention to an inscription situated in a rock cave at Villacchi Korale in the Anuradhapura District, where the place called "**GALGAY**" is recorded in the 2nd century A,D

The two words "**VOHARA NAKAHA**" were inscribed there. The word **'NAKAHA'** means by Naga or (by the man called Naga).

The duty of this '**VOHARA**' was to make laws as well as to inform the minister of law to see whether these laws are compatible with the **PRAVENI 'PUSTAKAYA'** or the customary law book, if something went wrong in the law, before submitting it to the king for his signature or the final confirmation.

This means the king himself could not carry out the legislative powers according to his own wish.

He should always follow the recommendation of his law ministers such as **VOHARA, DADANAYAKA** and **DANDA NAYAKA.**

Finally the conclusion that we can arrive at, is proved by another external incident which was mentioned in a Brahmi Inscription, which stated that a great king bought two lands situated near the Kantale Chetiya with his own money and offered to the temple.

This proves that the king did not have power of possessing all the lands of the country.

Here the king has behaved as a normal citizen. He was not a dictator accumulating all the execulive, the legislative and the judicial powers.

By

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